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ABSTRACT

The Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture commissioned the National Impact Study of Leadership Development in Extension (NISLDE), one of five national impact studies, to examine the leadership development work of Cooperative Extension staff nationwide. The study, responded to by 86 percent of the 3,100 extension educators and their supervisors initially surveyed, established that extension services invested over 2,500 staff years during 1985 developing the leadership competencies of an estimated 13.7 million clients. The competencies most frequently taught were solving problems, working with groups, and directing projects and meetings. Over 100,000 organizations and 330,000 volunteers collaborated with extension staff in leadership development. The great majority (84 percent) of extension personnel believed that developing leadership is a one of their responsibilities, and most tried to develop leadership skills while teaching non-leadership subjects. Extension should produce a formal statement about the importance of leadership development, establish procedures to aid and encourage leadership development, and ensure the quality of leadership development by strengthening its knowledge and research base. Sixteen figures illustrate study findings. (SLD)

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Developing Leadership Among Extension Clientele

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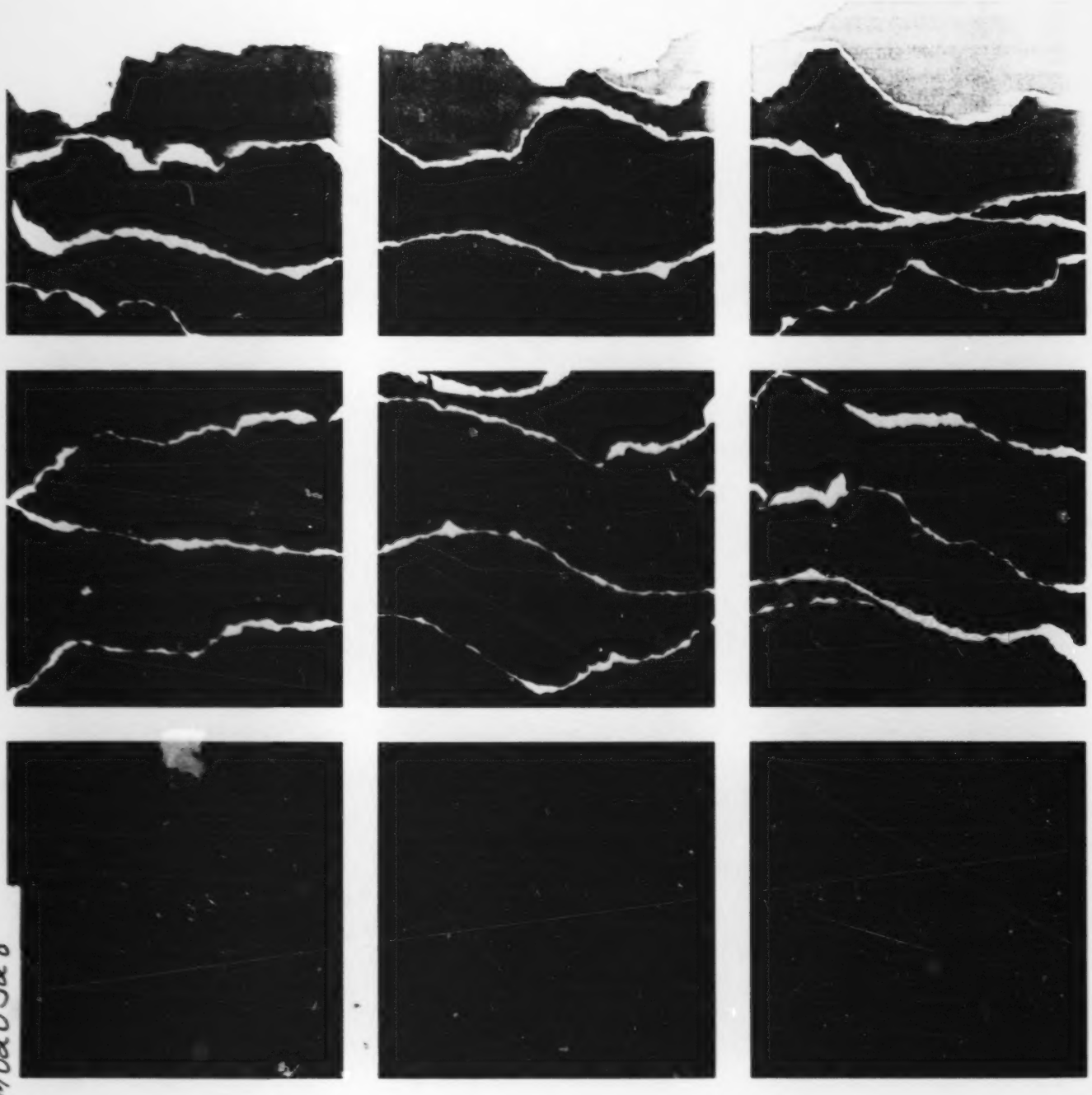

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Study Background

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of the National Impact Study of Leadership Development in Extension (NISLDE). The study examined the leadership development work of Cooperative Extension staff nationwide.

The Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, commissioned NISLDE as one of five national impact studies under the provisions of the Extension Accountability and Evaluation System. Additional support came from Washington State University's Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Research Center, its Department of Rural Sociology, and other Cooperative Extension Services throughout the nation.

A complete description of the participants, purposes, methods, findings, and recommendations appears in the study's technical report titled *Developing Leadership Among Extension Clientele: An Evaluation of Inputs*, published by Extension Service, USDA in cooperation with Cooperative Extension, Washington State University, June 1989.

Key Findings

- Extension invested over 2,600 staff years during 1985 developing the leadership competencies of an estimated 13.7 million clientele.
- The competencies most frequently taught were solving problems, directing projects and activities, forming and working with groups, planning for group action, managing meetings, and communicating effectively.
- Over 100,000 organizations and 330,000 volunteers collaborated with staff in leadership development work.
- 84 percent of Extension personnel believed that developing the leadership skills of clientele is one of their responsibilities and 91 percent attempted to develop leadership skills.
- Three-fifths of Extension staff tried to develop leadership skills while teaching nonleadership subjects such as agronomy or nutrition.
- Supervisors supported leadership development work in various ways, albeit infrequently.
- Extension staff defined leadership development in diverse ways, thereby impeding collaboration and coordination.

Recommendations

The report makes three recommendations. Extension should:

1. Produce a formal statement about the importance of leadership development.
2. Establish procedures that will aid and encourage leadership development.
3. Ensure the quality of leadership development work by strengthening its research and knowledge base.

Contents

Purpose and Scope 1
Background 1
Purpose 1
Study Methods 1
Defining Leadership Development 2
Study Definition 2
Listing of Leadership Competencies 2
Differing Staff Conceptions 2
More on the Study's Definition 6
Profile of Extension's Leadership Development Effort 7
Instructional Goals 7
Delivery Methods 10
Clientele 11
Support 13
Supervisors 14
Staff Characteristics 15
Knowledge Base 18
Policy 18
Recommendations 19
Policy 19
Procedures 19
Research 19

List of Figures

1. How often Extension staff tried to develop leadership competencies among clientele by type of competency 7
2. Number of hours per week spent developing leadership competencies among clientele 8
3. Total staff years and staff years spent on leadership development by major program area 9
4. Distribution of leadership development clientele among staff 10
5. Length of time spent with leadership development clientele during 1985 10
6. Duration of contact with leadership development clientele during 1985 11
7. Gender of leadership development clientele and U.S. population 11
8. Race or ethnic origin of leadership development clientele and clientele of all Extension programs 12
9. Age of leadership development clientele and U.S. population 12
10. Household income of leadership development clientele and U.S. population 13
11. Leadership status of leadership development clientele 13
12. Distribution of black leadership development clientele among staff members 14
13. Availability and usefulness of support for leadership development work by type and source of support 15
14. Frequency of supervisor support for leadership development by type of support 16
15. Supervisors' response to statement, "I find it difficult to judge the quality of leadership development work with Extension clientele." 17
16. Gender of leadership development clientele by gender of staff member 17

Purpose and Scope

Background

Leadership development has been part of Extension education since the early 1900s when agricultural cooperatives and boys' and girls' clubs were formed, although the term "leadership development" was not used at that time. Since then, historical events and legislative mandates have changed the nature of Extension's leadership development effort. Today, Extension staff conduct a wide range of educational activities aimed at developing leadership skills among rural and urban residents, local government officials, homemakers, officers and members of agricultural commodity groups and other volunteer associations, 4-H club leaders and members, and many others.

Despite this rich heritage, documentation has been scattered and sparse. A smattering of anecdotal accounts by staff provided clues about the nature of this work and its clientele. Also, a few studies have addressed specific aspects of Extension's leadership development work, such as community leadership and volunteerism. The best available estimate of the volume of such work came from the Extension Management Information System (EMIS), which suggested that during 1983, leadership development consumed 10 percent of staff time. But, no comprehensive review of Extension's leadership development work had been attempted.

Purpose

In light of this situation, the Extension Service, USDA, commissioned this study in 1983 to describe and assess the Cooperative Extension System's leadership development work.

Since then, the National Impact Study of Leadership Development in Extension (NISLDE) has focused on three things: defining leadership development; describing leadership development as it is actually practiced; and recommending improvements in the practice and management of this type of education. This report summarizes the study results.

Study Methods

The study proceeded in two phases. The first phase dealt principally with definitional and measurement issues. The study team examined organizational documents for clues about policy and practice; interviewed federal, state, district, and county staff about their views on leadership development and the nature of their work; conferred with persons identified as highly knowledgeable about leadership development within and outside Extension; and reviewed the research literature on leadership development and Extension's leadership development work. These activities laid the conceptual and measurement bases for surveying staff about their leadership development practices with clientele.

During its second phase, the 1986 study surveyed all state administrators and a nationally representative cross-section of nearly 3,100 Extension educators and their supervisors about their leadership development activities during 1985. All major program areas are represented in the stratified random sample, as are all fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Territories. Of the initial sample, 86 percent returned a usable questionnaire.

Supplementary data come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and EMIS. Data about how staff view leadership development come from field interviews and comments added to the questionnaire.

Defining Leadership Development

Study Definition

A review of published and unpublished materials on leadership development reveals no standard, widely accepted definition. A substantial body of research defines leadership in terms of the ability to influence. ***This study defines leadership development as the fostering of competencies that enable one to influence people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior***. The term "competencies" refers to skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. This report uses the terms "skills" and "competencies" interchangeably.

Given the abstract quality of the above definition—an inherent problem with one-sentence definitions of complex topics—the study compiled a comprehensive list of leadership competencies. This list was used to communicate with Extension staff about the subject matter under study.

Listing of Leadership Competencies

The list of leadership competencies includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that are taught to Extension clientele for developing themselves and influencing others. These competencies were found in Extension documents (e.g., plans of work), curricula, and educational materials, and through interviews with leadership development experts and Extension staff engaged in such work. This search netted over 100 competencies which were grouped into thirteen categories. These are the first thirteen categories in the box on page 3.

Additional competencies were volunteered during the study's survey of Extension staff and these have been grouped into the remaining six categories of the box, page 3. The nineteen categories represent the leadership competencies that Extension staff tried to develop in 1985.

Differing Staff Conceptions

To measure leadership development practices reliably, it was necessary to know how staff defined "leadership development." By conferring with staff in various positions with different subject matter responsibilities, the study found that Extension personnel hold many different conceptions of leadership development. Their conceptions centered around four aspects of educational work: audience, purpose, content, and method. The study finds this diversity of viewpoints a source of confusion and disagreement among staff, inhibiting communication about leadership development.

■ **Audience**. Some staff members defined leadership development in terms of working with individuals in leadership positions. Other staff avoided referring to positions held by clientele when defining leadership development.

Staff adhering to an audience-based conception believed that all educational work with persons who hold important positions in Extension or the community constitutes leadership development, regardless of the subject matter being taught. For example, one staff member regarded the teaching of poultry management techniques to leaders as leadership development. Also, many Extension personnel regarded the instruction of volunteers in leadership positions as leadership development, even when instruction centered on nonleadership topics (e.g., gardening, administrative procedure).

A home economist voiced uncertainty about this view of leadership development:

I spend a great deal of time helping county staff and 4-H volunteers learn how to implement

Leadership competencies developed among Extension clientele

1. Solving Problems Evaluating alternatives, estimating future impacts, building general agreements.

2. Directing Projects or Activities Conducting need assessments, setting goals and priorities, planning, managing human resources, supervising, measuring performance, evaluating, maintaining supportive work environments.

3. Forming and Working with Groups Recruiting, building teams, identifying responsibilities.

4. Planning for Group Action Recognizing diverse needs, identifying key decision makers, understanding power structures, organizational development, group dynamics, identifying cooperative strategies.

5. Managing Meetings Arranging facilities and equipment, building an agenda, using parliamentary procedures.

6. Communicating Effectively Understanding communication styles, listening, being assertive, speaking in public.

7. Developing Proficiency in Teaching Maintaining learner interest and enthusiasm, managing learning environments.

8. Mobilizing for Group Action Developing broad-based support, obtaining commitments to action influencing public policy.

9. Understanding and Developing Oneself Identifying and clarifying values, assessing degree of self-confidence, relating to people with different life-styles, building self-confidence.

10. Understanding Financial Matters Allocating financial resources, budgeting and record keeping, understanding financial statements.

11. Understanding Leadership Understanding leadership roles and styles, adapting leadership styles to situations.

12. Understanding Society Learning about society's institutions, interpreting economic and social data, understanding social problems, learning about public decision-making bodies and procedures.

13. Understanding Social Change Understanding change and its effects, understanding how new ideas are adopted.

14. Arbitrating Managing conflict and stress, decision making, risk taking, negotiating responsibilities.

15. Developing Resources Fundraising, developing human resources, cultivating public and community relations, recruiting volunteers.

16. Developing Followers Giving support to others, encouraging altruism, self-discipline, responsibility, sincerity, and trust.

17. Changing Behavior Increasing productivity, managing time, increasing citizen involvement relating to diverse audiences.

18. Clarifying Attitudes Assessing others' motives, examining the consequences of valued and unvalued behaviors, teaching values, identifying ethical and moral responsibilities.

19. Creativity Working creatively.

effective youth nutritional educational programs. Yet I do not consider this to be developing leadership skills. Is it?

Staff with an opposing view distinguished between educational work with leaders and fostering leadership skills. In their view, educating leaders on nonleadership subjects is not leadership development.

■ **Purpose.** Many staff defined leadership development in two key ways related to instructional purpose: (1) by whose purpose is being served—the staff's, the organization's, or the client's; and (2) by what is to be changed—a person, group, or the public at large.

■ Whose Purpose. (a) Staff intent. Most staff members encountered during field observation saw themselves as developing leader-

ship only when that was their intent. When that was not their intent, staff did not see themselves developing leadership, even though their behavior might indicate otherwise. As one staff member said:

I regularly taught clientele three topics: problem solving, communicating effectively, and understanding social change, but totally apart from any thought of leadership development.

The gap between intent and behavior prompted another staff member to remark:

I believe that Extension agents teach leadership development many times during the year without planning or even realizing that they are ... developing leaders.

(b) Official purpose. Some staff members relied on organizational cues for determining what constitutes leadership development. Only those programs officially designated as leadership development work were regarded as such. Typical in this regard, an agricultural agent responsible for a dairy program noted:

I have not done any work really with leadership development in mind (no formal work). I have spent substantial time, however, working with dairy farmers on public policy issues such as local land taxation. Much of this work involved "stimulating" farmers to become more knowledgeable and active in community and state affairs.

This agent only thought of himself as conducting a dairy program, following plan-of-work terminology. He regarded his leadership development effort as incidental.

Other staff regarded their attempt at developing leadership skills among clientele as leadership development, regardless of whether it took place during an officially designated leadership development program or some other kind of program.

(c) Client intent. Very few Extension staff encountered during field observation defined leadership development in terms of a client's intentions. To note an exception, one agent asserted that both teacher and learner needed to agree that leadership development was a topic for instruction before it could qualify as leadership development.

Most commonly, staff undertook leadership development on their own initiative, without organizational or clientele endorsement. A state specialist acknowledged this point by stating that for the most part Extension staff develop leadership on their own initiative.

A key distinction made by many Extension personnel was whether leadership development is a means or end. Sometimes, the sole or primary purpose of instruction is the development of leadership, as in a formal leadership program. More often, leadership is developed as a means to other ends (e.g., increased crop production). Where leadership was taught as a primary objective, staff uniformly saw it as leadership development. Perceptions varied where leadership was taught as a means to another end: some saw it as leadership development, while others did not.

■ What Is To Be Changed. Staff members also differed in terms of whether they thought of leadership development as changing a person, group, or an entire population.

(a) Skills for personal development. Some staff thought of leadership development in terms of fostering personal development. Other staff saw personal development as extrinsic, i.e., pre-leadership.

The first group taught such competencies as setting priorities, managing stress, and developing

greater self-awareness. One agent of this persuasion regarded individual worth as the heart of leadership development:

You cannot develop leadership if you cannot develop that person's self-worth and self-esteem.

The second group excluded self-direction and self-management competencies from their view of leadership development.

(b) Skills for influencing groups. Many Extension staff thought of leadership development in terms of influencing group objectives and processes. They tried to strengthen existing groups and foster new ones by cultivating group-relevant skills (e.g., building teams). An agent expressed it this way:

Some groups have highly developed "leadership" and others are in need of help in developing their organizations.

(c) Skills for influencing the general public. Some staff members saw leadership development in terms of influencing public affairs and the public at large. They tried to teach skills such as understanding power structures. An agricultural specialist described his work this way:

I've tried to encourage people to organize into common interest groups and then approach political and/or educational leaders as spokespersons for the group. Emphasis is placed on group clout versus the meager efforts of individuals.

Two educational emphases were discerned among public affairs-minded staff, one aimed at increasing knowledge, the other at changing behavior. Some staff members attempted to create a more informed citizenry (e.g., by teaching about economic markets, public decision-making bodies and procedures, and demographic trends). Other staff took a more activist stance by teaching clientele how to represent their point of view to the public at large through skills such as mobilizing for group action.

■ **Content**. Many Extension educators thought that instructional content (subject matter) determines what is, or is not, leadership development. Some staff thought that teaching subject matter of any sort constitutes leadership development. Other staff based their leadership development work on specific subject matter such as public speaking or understanding social change.

Illustrating the first viewpoint, some staff said that by learning better production techniques, clientele will become leaders in their field of endeavor. Personnel holding this view often stated:

Almost everything we do in Extension is leadership development.

Other staff rejected this viewpoint because all-inclusive terms are meaningless.

The all-encompassing perspective was often expressed in the form of a belief that "technical" (i.e., nonleadership) knowledge begets leadership. A specialist stated the idea this way:

My objective is to teach [nonleadership] subject matter. Any leadership development would be the result of increased proficiency in this subject.

Such a view suggests a disregard for leadership development, its subject matter, and related research. Countering this view, other staff believed that expertise in nonleadership topics (e.g., pest management) cannot substitute for leadership skills, and that both must be learned.

Staff who saw leadership development as having its own subject matter often disagreed with one another on which subjects pertain to leadership development, because they were schooled in different research and academic traditions. For example, staff

members with agricultural economics training tended to think of leadership development as public policy education (e.g., developing an in-depth understanding of an issue). Their counterparts with training in rural sociology thought not only of public policy education but also group management and public affairs leadership skills. Economists thought in terms of increased understanding, while sociologists thought also in terms of behavioral outcomes.

■ **Method**. Some staff defined leadership development in terms of instructional method while others did not. In some cases, staff holding a method-based conception believed that only formal teaching (such as lectures or workshops) qualifies as leadership development. Adherents to this point of view denied involvement in leadership development when using informal instructional methods, saying "I only advise."

Alternatively, some personnel viewed the experiences that their clientele undergo while participating in an Extension-related event (e.g., chairing a committee) as leadership development. Frequently, this judgment was made regardless of what clientele were taught and why. Experience was equated with education.

Other staff disliked defining leadership development by reference to instructional method. A program leader expressed this by saying:

Throwing people into a swimming pool is one thing; teaching them how to swim is another. I don't equate the two.

■ **Conclusion**. Extension staff defined leadership development in various ways. Their conceptions hinged not only on purpose and instructional content, like the study's definition, but on audience and method as well. The lack of a common definition implies difficulties in collaboration and coordination among staff, where leadership development is concerned.

More on the Study's Definition

Staff conceptions help clarify the study's definition. Regarding purpose, the study definition includes personal development skills in the definition of leadership development as well as the ability to influence others. Intent is irrelevant to the study's definition: leadership skills may be taught (or learned) as a means or an end, regardless of who intended it.

As for content, leadership development research determines the boundaries of the study's definition. Some specific competencies (e.g., communication skills) enhance personal development and interpersonal influence, research shows, but other competencies (e.g., knowledge of production techniques) do not. Thus, research is the wellspring of instructional subject matter for leadership development.

Profile of Extension's Leadership Development Effort

Instructional Goals

■ **Competencies Developed**. To measure the type and extent of leadership development attempted with clientele, the study surveyed Extension staff about how often they tried to develop the first thirteen competency categories listed in the box on page 3 during 1985.

Each of these first thirteen categories was attempted at least once that year by between 68 to 86 percent of the staff (Figure 1). As for the six other competencies volunteered during the survey, fewer than 5 percent attempted each one. More mention might have been made of these categories had they been listed in the questionnaire. In short, Extension's leadership development effort covers a wide spectrum of competencies.

In the box on the next page are examples of the leadership development work of several respondents. Highlighted are the educational foci and competencies taught.

The study's findings suggest that Extension staff tended to teach skills associated with (a) a stable social order and similarity in values; (b) working within groups; and (c) knowing how to do things right (transactional leadership), as opposed to knowing which is the right thing to do (transformational leadership). Also, there was an apparent emphasis on "doing" over "understanding." Among the first thirteen competencies, those that entail behavioral change (the first eight) were mentioned more often than those that entail increased comprehension.

Otherwise stated, Extension staff gave less emphasis to the following kinds of competencies:

- those for dealing with change, diversity, and conflict;
- those for inter-group relations and public affairs;
- those associated with transformational (visionary) leadership; and
- those involving knowledge, perception and attitude.

The study's technical report questions whether these skills are receiving due emphasis.

The typical (modal) staff member tried to develop competencies in all thirteen categories sometime during 1985. Nine percent did not try to develop any competency in the twenty categories. Three-fifths of Extension staff developed leadership skills while teaching nonleadership subjects such as agronomy or nutrition.

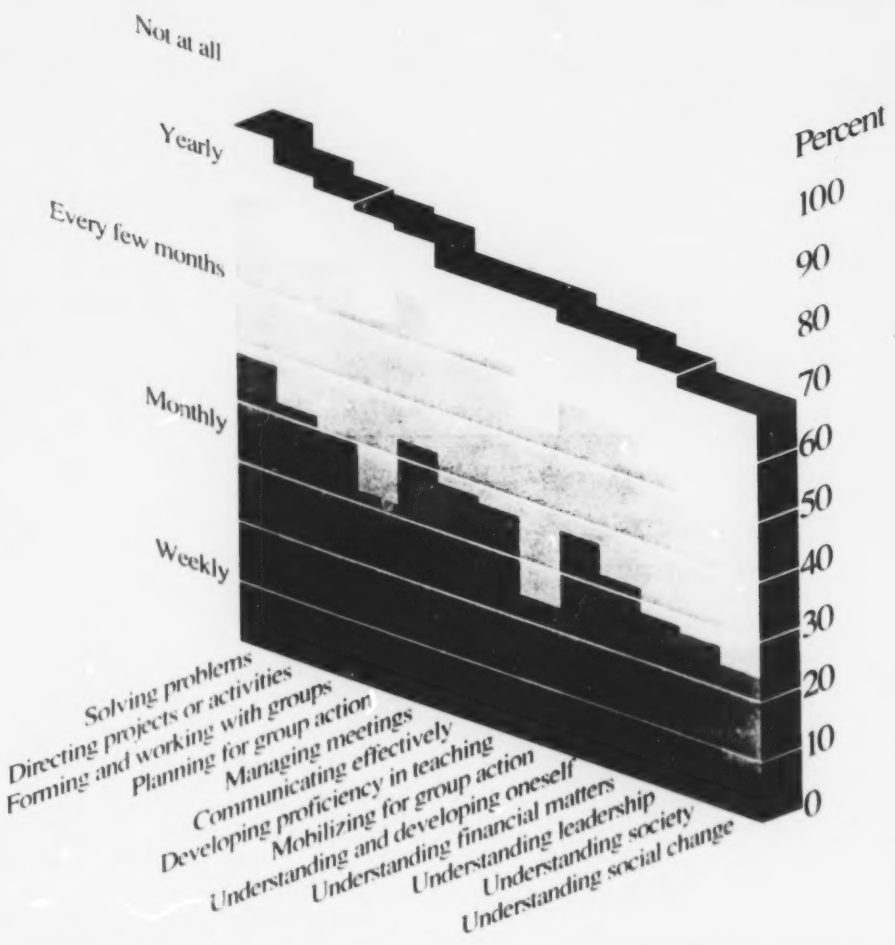

Figure 1. How often Extension staff tried to develop leadership competencies among clientele, by type of competency.

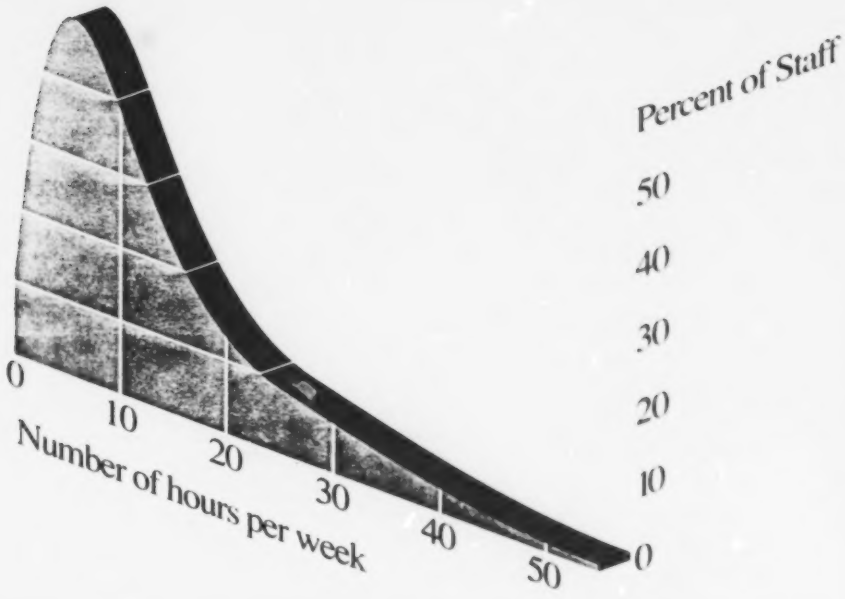

Figure 2. Number of hours per week spent developing leadership competencies among clientele.

Examples of Leadership Development Work

Educational Focus	Leadership Competencies Taught
Training agricultural producers to organize a grassroots legislative committee	Organizational leadership Problem solving Planning for group action Mobilizing support
Leadership training for officers of a state-wide marina association	Public speaking Conducting effective board meetings
Training for persons responsible for county day-care services	Understanding leadership styles Agenda building Meeting management
Training for community leaders and local government officials concerned with downtown redevelopment	Communication skills Forming and organizing groups Managing meetings Problem solving Fund raising
Leadership training for a regional horticulture program advisory committee	Public relations Assessing trends and problems Group action strategies Team approach to solving problems
4-H livestock judging school	Decision making Public speaking
Training for Extension Homemakers' executive committee members	Committee management Delegation Program planning and implementation techniques

Clearly, Extension's leadership development effort represents the combined endeavor of the vast majority of its staff, not a select few, as is generally the case with other subject matter.

Staff members tried to develop each of the first thirteen skill categories once every few months, on average. Thus, many staff members acquired limited experience developing any one skill during the year.

■ **Amount of Leadership Development Work**. On average, staff spent seven hours per week trying to develop leadership skills among clientele, i.e., 15 percent of their work time. This represents an annual total for the Cooperative Extension System of over 2,600 staff years. The majority of staff (57 percent) spent about the same amount of time developing leadership during the previous three years. Although data are not available on the leadership development efforts of other organizations, such a volume of effort suggests that Extension is in the vanguard of this kind of work.

The number of hours that staff spent per week developing leadership ranged from zero to over fifty (Figure 2). The number of hours varied by the staff member's organizational position and program area. Agents averaged nine hours per week, accounting for 70 percent of Extension's leadership development effort, while state specialists and district staff averaged five hours per week. University department chairs and state administrators averaged two and six hours per week, respectively.

Comparing major program areas, 4-H staff averaged sixteen hours per week on leadership development work. Community resource development and home economics staff averaged ten and nine hours respectively, while agriculture and natural resources

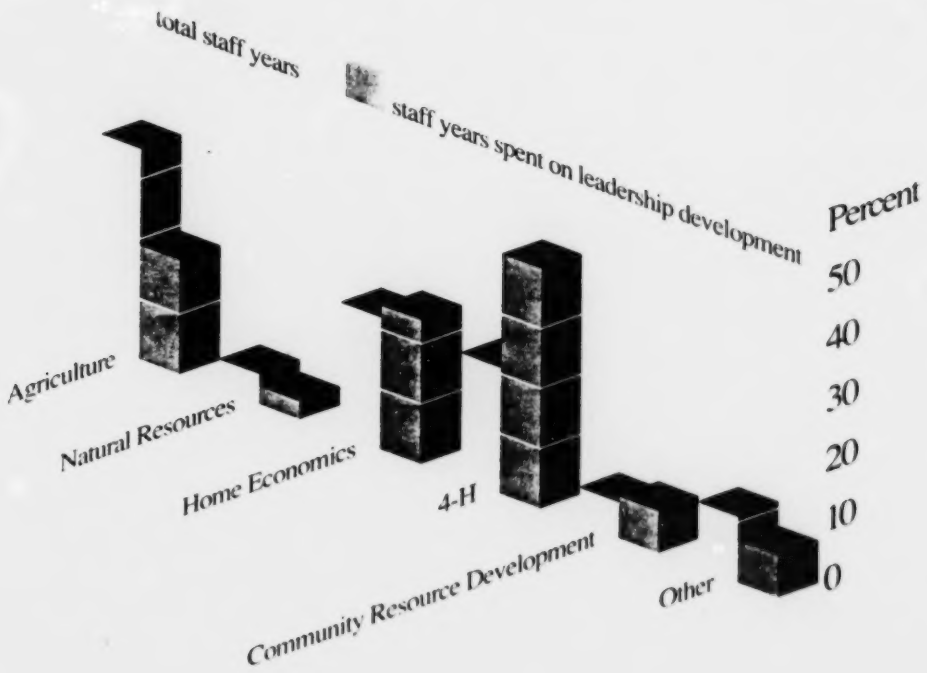

Figure 3. Total staff years and staff years spent on leadership development by major program area.

staff each averaged four. Agriculture and natural resources program areas, which together constituted more than two-fifths of Extension personnel, accounted for about one-fifth of the staff years that Extension invested in developing leadership during 1985. In contrast, 4-H constituted roughly one-fifth of Extension staff and accounted for approximately two-fifths of the staff years spent on leadership development (Figure 3).

■ **Proficiency Level**. To learn more about the nature of instructional objectives, the study queried staff about the level of proficiency expected of clientele regarding their understanding of leadership concepts and their ability to perform leadership tasks. The level of proficiency expected of representative work[1] clientele varied from basic to advanced, with the average expectation falling midway between these extremes. About 22 percent of staff members tried to develop basic levels of understanding while 13 percent aimed for advanced levels. Those who aimed for the higher levels tended to spend more time developing leadership.

[1]In this study, representative work refers to those educational activities that respondents described as best representing their leadership development work during 1985. Many survey respondents reported what they regarded as their better work. Hence, findings about representative work cannot be safely generalized to all of Extension's leadership development work.

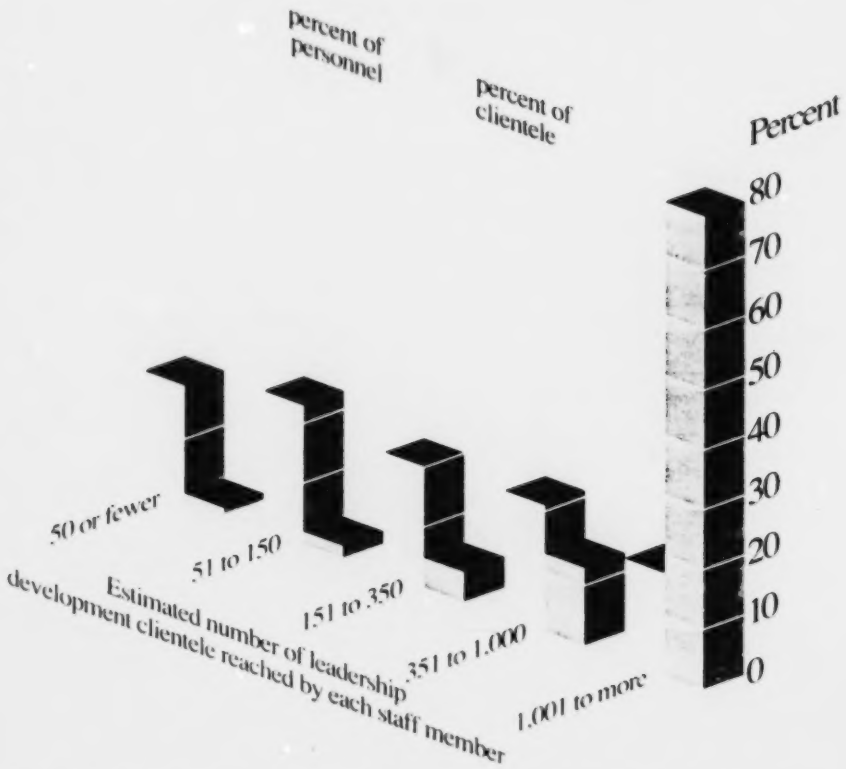

Figure 4. Distribution of leadership development clientele among staff.

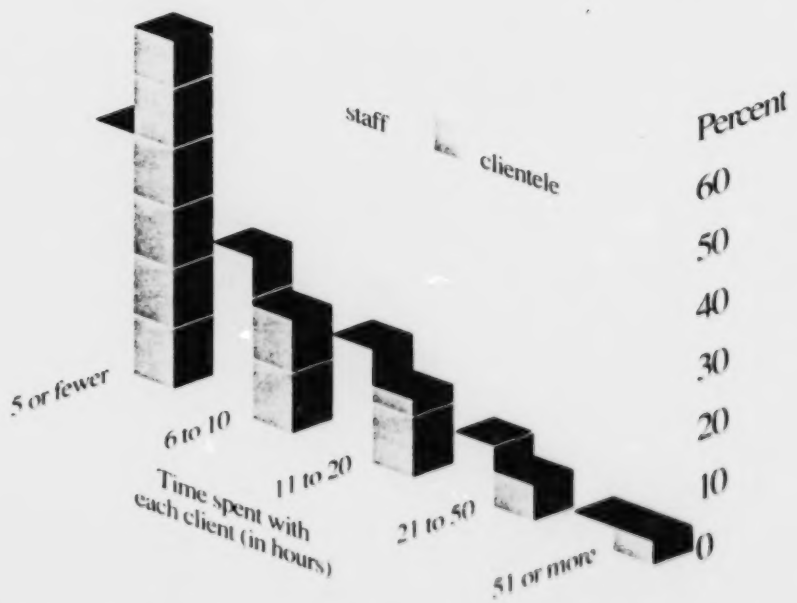

Figure 5. Length of time spent with leadership development clientele during 1985. Data refer to representative work.

Delivery Methods

■ **Methods of Instruction**. Extension staff tried to develop leadership among clientele through the following instructional methods:

Instructional method	Percent of staff
Advising	85
Providing practical experience	80
Group instruction	79
Role modeling	76
No method reported	5

Nearly two-thirds of the staff used all four methods. Combinations with advising were the most popular. Staff members who relied on advising either as their sole or predominant method tended to reach fewer clientele.

■ **Teaching Practices**. Extension personnel also used the following teaching practices in their representative leadership development work during 1985:

Teaching practices	Percent of staff
Planning instructional methods	70
Making use of reference materials when planning	63
Making use of reference materials when instructing	61
Developing skills among clientele systematically over time	58
Evaluating one's efforts	52
Planning instructional objectives	50

Of these six teaching practices, the average staff member used four.

The findings suggest that the bulk of leadership development is done on a planned basis, not intuitively, spontaneously, or unsystematically. Also, the lesser prevalence of the last two practices suggests that the means of instruction receive more attention than its

ends, where leadership development is concerned.

Staff members using multiple methods of instruction used more of the six teaching practices than staff using only one method. This implies wide disparities in the quality of leadership development work. Also, the more methods and practices staff members used, the more frequently they tried to develop leadership. This finding suggests that a sole or primary reliance on mass communication techniques would jeopardize leadership development efforts.

Clientele

■ **Number of Clientele**. Extension tried to enhance the leadership competencies of 13.7 million people during 1985, according to the survey. Client load was unevenly distributed among staff (Figure 4). Less than one-fifth of the staff (17 percent) reportedly reached four-fifths (79 percent) of the leadership development clientele. Half the staff reached 200 or fewer clientele.

On average, Extension staff spent an estimated six hours during the year trying to develop the leadership skills of each client of representative work (Figure 5). Contacts with these clientele spanned an average of twelve months (Figure 6), suggesting neither cursory nor permanent relationships.

■ **Demographic Traits**. According to staff estimates about the characteristics of clientele of representative work, females comprised 61 percent of the leadership development clientele, although according to the Bureau of the Census they are only 52 percent of the U.S. population (Figure 7). This reflects the high proportion of females among volunteers, around whom much of the representative work revolved.

Individual racial and ethnic groups were reached about as often as they participated in all

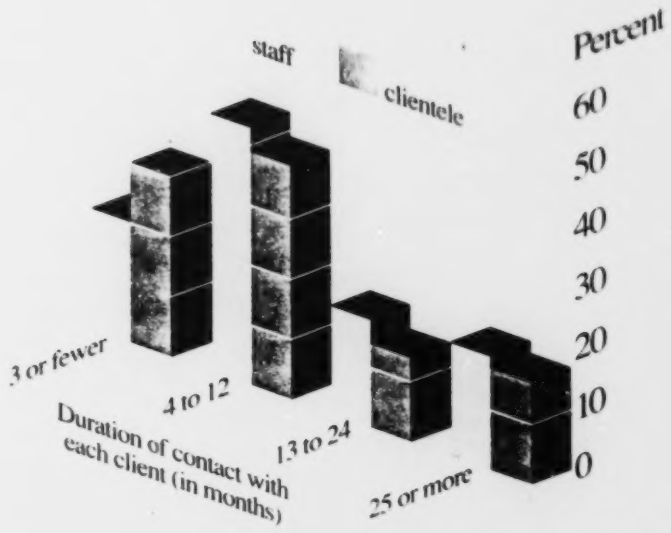

Figure 6. Duration of contact with leadership development clientele during 1985. Data refer to representative work.

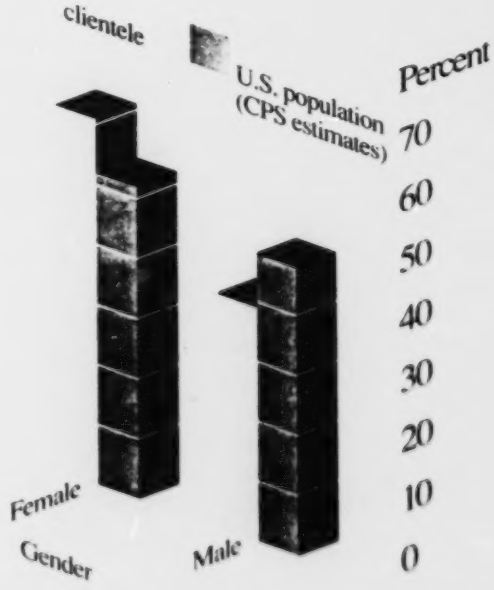

Figure 7. Gender of leadership development clientele and U.S. population. Clientele data refer to representative work.

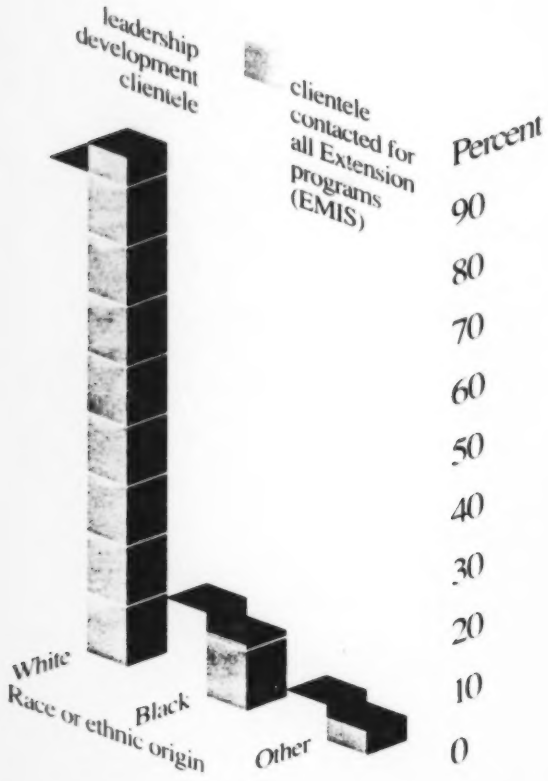

Figure 8. Race or ethnic origin of leadership development clientele and clientele of all Extension programs. Leadership development clientele data refer to representative work.

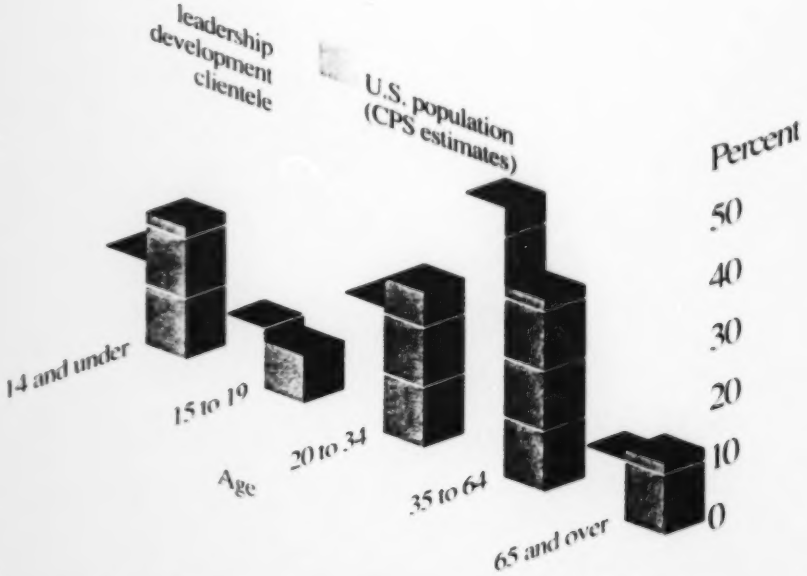

Figure 9. Age of leadership development clientele and U.S. population. Clientele data refer to representative work.

Extension programs (Figure 8) and roughly in proportion to their numbers in the general population.

Extension staff directed their representative leadership development efforts toward people between the ages of 35 and 64 in disproportion to their numbers in the population (Figure 9). Similarly, efforts were directed toward lower-middle-income groups ($10,000 to $34,999) in disproportion to their numbers in the population (Figure 10). Staff also tried to develop the leadership competencies of established leaders more often than emerging leaders or other adults and youth (Figure 11).

■ **Organizational Affiliations**. A majority of Extension personnel worked with diverse types of organizations when trying to develop the leadership skills of their members, with 61 percent working with five or more types of organizations at least once during 1985. Proportionately more staff (73 percent) tried to develop the leadership skills of persons affiliated with community and civic service organizations than any other organizational type. Staff worked most frequently (35 percent at least once a month) with persons affiliated with a farm, ranch, or agriculture-related business.

■ **Selectivity in Outreach**. The evidence gained from representative leadership development work indicates considerable selectivity in who educates whom. For example, 11 percent of the staff reached 79 percent of the black clientele for leadership development purposes; most Extension staff (53 percent) had no black clientele (Figure 12). The same applies in varying degree to females, young and old people, and both low- and high-income people.

Support

From Extension. Staff received support for leadership development work from a variety of sources within Extension (Figure 13). Common sources of support in addition to salary and travel expenses included help and encouragement from agents (80 percent), state program leaders (76 percent), and specialists (71 percent), along with counseling and encouragement from supervisors (70 percent). In addition, 76 percent of staff members received educational materials relevant to leadership development that probably originated within Extension.

■ **From External Sources**. Staff also received a variety of supports from external sources. The most common form of external support was help and encouragement from clientele (80 percent). Nearly two-thirds of the staff had clientele willing to give additional time for leadership development work beyond that required by the learning situation (e.g., serving on an advisory committee).

Volunteers supported the majority of staff. Over 330,000 people volunteered to assist Extension staff in their leadership development work during 1985.

Staff members also received support in 1985 from an average of eight organizations other than Cooperative Extension. Altogether, more than 100,000 organizations supported Extension's leadership development work in 1985. More than two out of five staff members received such support in the form of facility use, financial support, or staff time. Large-scale leadership development efforts relied on outside funding. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is the leading source of outside funds for Extension's formally organized leadership development work. The findings imply considerable entrepreneurial

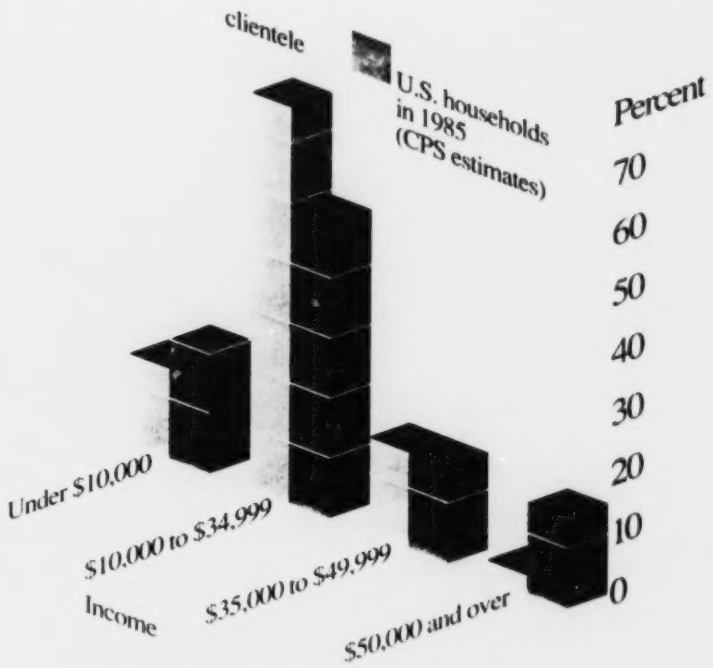

Figure 10. Household income of leadership development clientele and U.S. population. Clientele data refer to representative work.

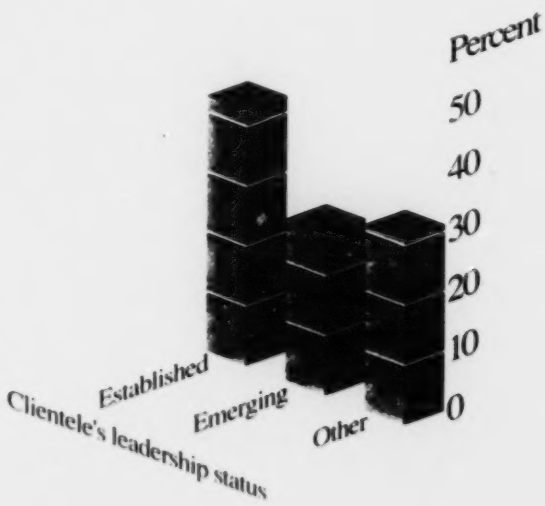

Figure 11. Leadership status of leadership development clientele. Data refer to representative work.

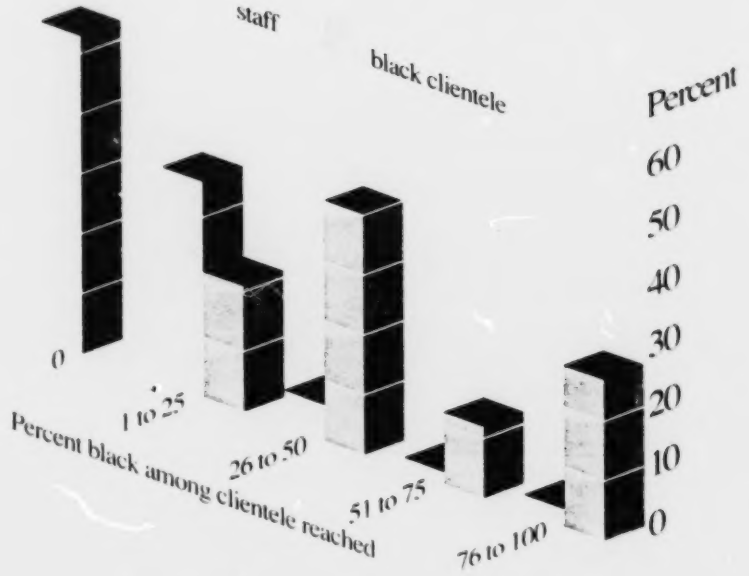

Figure 12. Distribution of black leadership development clientele among staff members. Data refer to representative work.

skill on the part of Extension staff in obtaining and managing resources from diverse places for their leadership development work.

■ **Usefulness**. Extension staff members received an average of thirteen different forms of assistance from internal and external sources during 1985. In their opinion, the most useful forms of assistance, when available, were financial support and help from agents, clientele, and specialists (Figure 13).

■ **Organizational Inducements**. Extension staff felt more responsible for leadership development when it was included in their plan of work, position description, and as a criterion for assessing job performance. Staff also felt a greater sense of responsibility when they believed their supervisors expected such work. Staff members with all these inducements spent an average of eighteen hours per week attempting to develop leadership, compared to one hour per week for those reporting no inducements.

However, more Extension staff felt responsible for developing leadership than might be predicted solely on the basis of organizational inducements. For example, while 84 percent of Extension staff reported feeling responsible, only 70 percent said their supervisors expected them to develop leadership. This suggests widespread support among staff for leadership development work.

Supervisors

Persons who were directly responsible for supervising the work of program-delivery personnel (para-professionals, agents, and specialists) in 1985 supported leadership development in many ways, albeit infrequently (Figure 14). The two most common practices reported by supervisors (counseling on importance of leadership development skills and raising leadership development as a topic at staff meetings) occurred on average at least once every few months. Supervisors were more likely to support staff directly (e.g., through counseling) than to seek help from third parties (e.g., by soliciting specialist assistance, or seeking outside funding). Seventy-three percent of the supervisors included leadership development in performance appraisals.

Supervisors lagged behind agents and clientele in supporting leadership development work, judging by survey reports from both supervisors and their staff. This is especially true of supervisors in agriculture and natural resources.

Supervisors were more likely to support leadership development work when:

- they were convinced that it was necessary to encourage personnel under their supervision to spend more time developing leadership;
- they felt able to judge the quality of leadership development work;

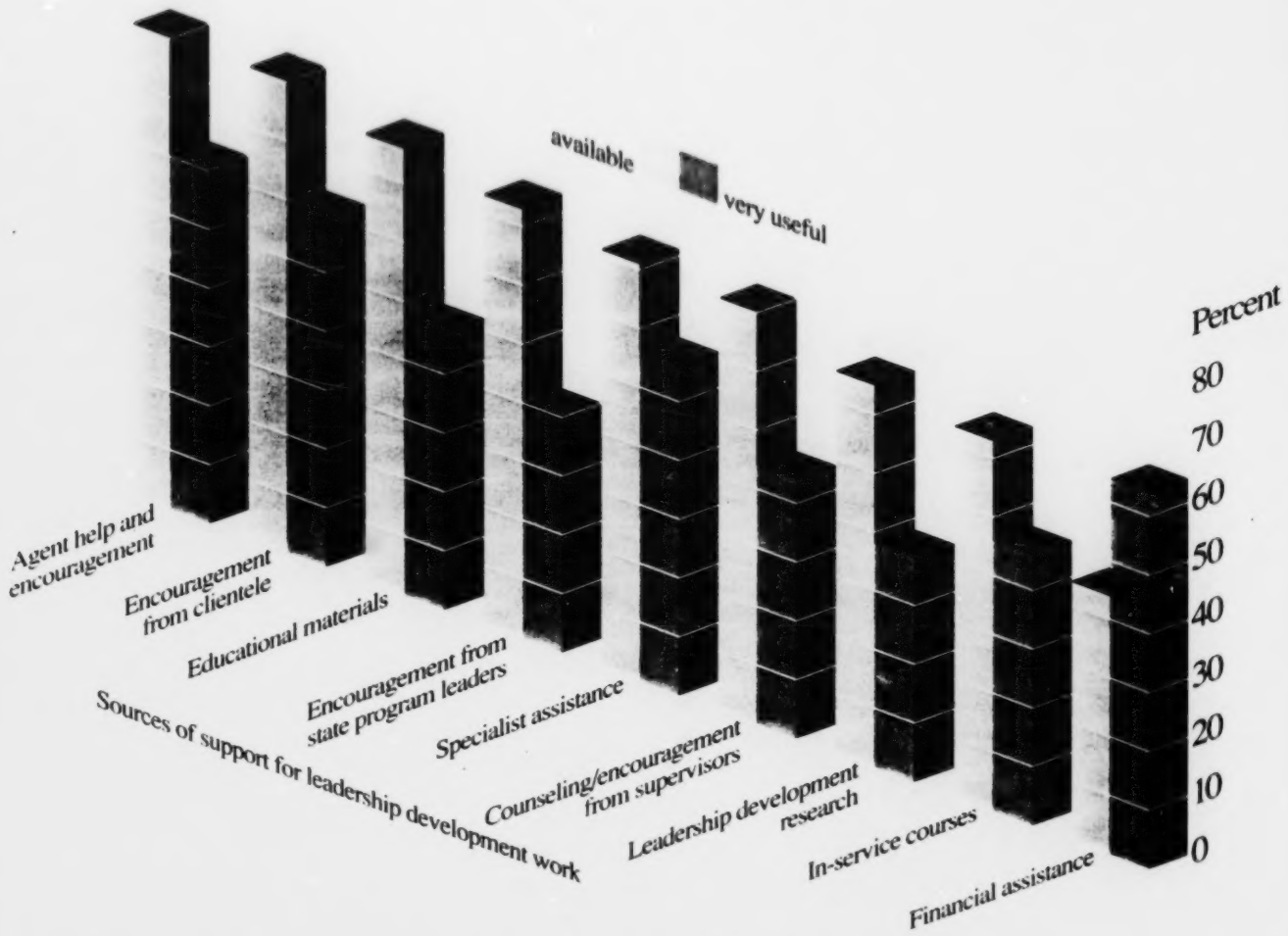

Figure 13. Availability and usefulness of support for leadership development work by type and source of support.

- they took courses of instruction in leadership development;
- they were employed by Extension less than 16 years; and
- they were female.

Half the supervisors indicated difficulty in judging the quality of leadership development work with Extension clientele (Figure 15).

Support from supervisors goes hand in hand with practice. Those staff members who received no support from their supervisor averaged two hours of leadership development weekly, compared to fourteen hours for those receiving many (ten or more) supports.

Staff Characteristics

■ **Attitudes**. Extension personnel held these views on leadership development work:

- 84 percent believed that developing the leadership skills of clientele is one of their responsibilities: 30 percent saw it as a primary responsibility, and 54 percent as a secondary responsibility.
- 73 percent felt that developing the leadership skills of clientele is at least as important as teaching other subject matter.

In sum, Extension staff appear highly motivated about leadership development work.

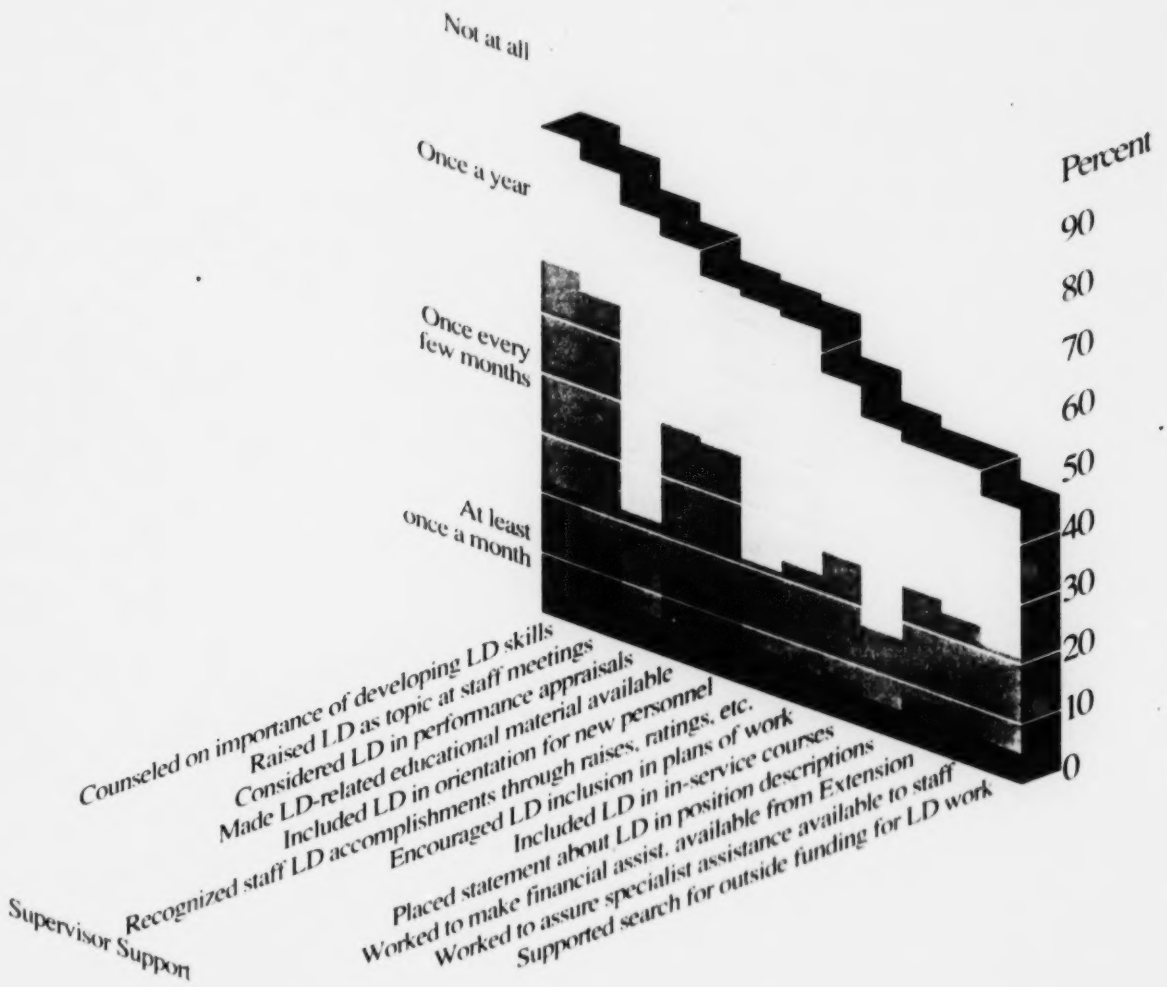

Figure 14. Frequency of supervisor support for leadership development, by type of support.

■ **Preparation**. Staff were somewhat reserved about their preparedness for this kind of work. A majority (58 percent) felt somewhat prepared to teach leadership skills, while another 27 percent felt very well-prepared. Approximately two-thirds of the staff had received instruction on leadership development. Roughly a quarter of the staff were developing leadership skills among clientele without training on this subject.

■ **Employment**. Most of the staff were closely associated with Extension. Over two-thirds had been Extension employees for over 6 years. Full-time employment with Extension was the norm for all but state specialists, three-fourths of whom worked fulltime for Extension.

■ **Demographic Traits**. Demographic questions in the survey reveal the following about Extension staff:

- 92 percent were white;
- 73 percent held one or more advanced degrees;
- males outnumbered females by almost two to one (64 versus 36 percent); and
- 53 percent were over 40 years of age.

■ **Profile of Frequent Leadership Developers**. Nearly a quarter of the staff (23 percent) spent sixteen or more hours per week trying to develop leadership among clientele during 1985. This group accounted for nearly half of Extension's 13.7 million leadership development clientele during 1985. In disproportionate numbers these staff:

- felt that developing the leadership skills of clientele was more important than teaching other subject matter;
- regarded this area of work as a primary responsibility;
- thought of themselves as very well-prepared to teach leadership skills;
- were credentialed with some form of training in leadership development;
- worked fulltime for Extension;
- were black;
- held a bachelor's degree, but no advanced degree;
- were female; and
- were age 40 or under.

■ **Relating Staff Characteristics to Their Work**. Staff attitudes and qualifications are more strongly correlated with the number of hours spent on leadership development than ties to Extension or demographic traits. Illustrating this, the survey data show a close, direct correspondence between the amount of responsibility that staff members feel and the amount of time devoted to leadership development. Those who considered leadership development a primary responsibility spent eighteen hours per week trying to develop these skills; those perceiving it as a secondary responsibility averaged six hours weekly; and those who felt no responsibility spent three hours per week, on average.

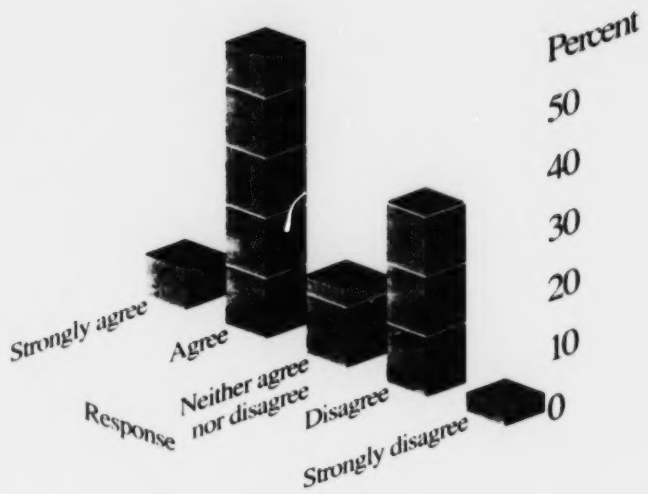

Figure 15. Supervisors' response to statement, "I find it difficult to judge the quality of leadership development work with Extension clientele."

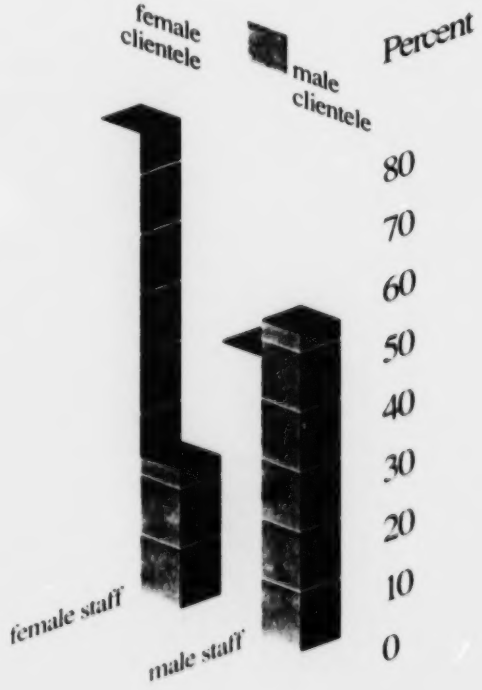

Figure 16. Gender of leadership development clientele by gender of staff member. Clientele data refer to representative work.

■ **Similarity in Staff and Clientele Characteristics.** Extension personnel most often tried to develop leadership among clientele with characteristics similar to their own. The following examples come from an analysis of staff reports about representative work.

• Staff 30 years of age and under estimated that 51 percent of their clientele were under the age of 20. The comparable statistic for older staff ranged from 16 to 22 percent. Younger personnel tended to develop the leadership skills of younger clientele.

• Personnel tended to develop leadership skills among clientele having racial or ethnic characteristics similar to their own. White staff members estimated that 88 percent of their leadership development clientele were white. Black personnel estimated they reached more blacks (57 percent) for leadership development purposes than whites (40 percent) and other minorities (3 percent). The other minorities reached an estimated 48 percent classified as other minority, 29 percent black, and 23 percent white.

The tendency for staff to reach clientele with traits similar to their own is more apparent for some groups than others. For example, female personnel estimated that 77 percent of their leadership development clientele were female. The comparable figure for male personnel was 47 percent. In other words, male staff members developed leadership skills among both genders more often than their female colleagues (Figure 16).

Knowledge Base

■ **Research.** The large body of research on leadership almost totally ignored leadership development, the study's literature review reveals. The research base is scattered across many disciplines. Agricultural experiment stations rarely sponsor research on leadership development. These conditions suggest problems in accessing the research base and using it to guide leadership development work.

The NISLDE survey confirmed this suggestion. Nearly four out of ten staff members made no use of reference materials when planning or conducting leadership development work. One-third of the staff received no research-based information in support of their leadership development work. Of those who did receive research-based information, three-fifths did not find it very useful, making leadership development research the least useful of all the supports studied. *This implies a need to pay more attention to when and how Extension staff make use of research for leadership development purposes.*

■ **Resident Instruction.** *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that virtually every U.S. institution of higher education will have some sort of leadership program by 1990. Yet, from interviews conducted in 1985, this study finds that only a handful of Extension campus-based staff who are highly knowledgeable about leadership development were associated with campus-based leadership efforts. Most were not aware of related activities on campus.

In sum, this study observed few mutually supportive ties concerning leadership development between Extension personnel at land-grant institutions and research or resident instruction personnel. *This implies isolation from the academic knowledge base.*

Policy

A review of national documents about Extension work failed to uncover a policy on leadership development.

Recommendations

This report offers three recommendations to improve Extension's leadership development effort. Each recommendation appears below along with suggestions for its implementation.

Policy. Produce a formal statement about the importance of leadership development work. Extension needs to make an official statement on the nature and scope of leadership development; its relevance to Extension's mission, the current initiatives, and other educational activities; the rationale for developing leadership; and the potential to be realized through collaboration with other organizations. The statement should advance the view that leadership skills are learned and that nearly everyone can learn them. It should also inspire common language and understanding.

Procedures. Establish procedures that will aid and encourage leadership development. Aid and encouragement can occur in many ways, such as:

Organizational Structure Stating the roles and responsibilities of local, state, and federal personnel in leadership development work and explaining how they interface.

Educational Practices Including leadership development as a part of each state and national initiative.

Accountability Finding out whether leadership development makes a difference in the lives of individuals and their families, organizations, and communities.

Resources Allocating enough resources to allow staff to fulfill Extension's policy and level of commitment to leadership development work.

Personnel Practices Providing inducements for staff to carry out leadership development work and rewarding them through performance appraisal, promotion, and awards.

Research. Ensure the quality of leadership development work by strengthening its research and knowledge base. Extension needs to draw upon the resources of the entire land-grant system, other universities, public and private organizations, and agencies for its leadership development research and knowledge base. Strategies are needed to foster working relations between Extension personnel and others engaged in leadership instruction and research. Basic and applied research interests should also be identified and pursued.

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